

THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE
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The arbitrator is the man in the middle. His role is to hear two sides of an argument, weigh evidence from a position of impartiality, then decide as to what the truth might be. He decides who is right. What do we do when we hear differing doctrines or interpretations of scripture, and seek to know the truth? We go to the man in the middle for understanding. We go to the Christ, the mediator who stands between God and man. He decides who is right.

It is interesting to note how many ways Jesus occupies, or should occupy the center of our existence. The central role Jesus fulfilled on the cross even threw shadows back in time and forward in time. For example, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was a fulfillment of the approach to God in the wilderness tabernacle. It was also an example of what would be required in the approach to God in the New Testament plan of salvation. Jesus claimed that **all** scripture pointed toward Him. In **John 5:39** He said they all “testified” of Him.

Did you ever wonder why there were three crosses when Jesus was crucified? The obvious answer is because there were three men. But only one sacrifice was required for atonement. Why the other two sharing the spotlight? The first man is easy. That was the man in the middle. What characterizes Jesus is His absolutely innocence. He had done nothing to deserve death. A second victim is characterized by the fact he was guilty as charged, but repented, desired, and received forgiveness. The third is characterized by the fact that he was guilty as charged, but was unrepentant and remained fixed in his path. These three men describe the conditions of everyone one of us, except the man in the middle. There may be some, such as aborted babies, who are truly innocent, but Christ is the only one of whom it is said that he sinned not. That leaves the rest of us who comes into the presence of the God in one of the other two categories.

At the center of the entire tapestry of biblical history stands Jesus, the man in the middle. He stands between the old and the new covenants, the Old and the New Testament. He stands between judgment by Law, which no man can keep, and Grace, which no man can earn. He stands between us and the consequences for our sins. He stands between two calendars, in the center of time, between AD and BC. He stands between the past and the future, always in the present. God is defined in the OT as an ever present help in the time of trouble. He even named Himself as the “I AM” the first and last. Jesus returned as the Comforter, who promised He would never leave or forsake us. He said, “Lo, I AM with you always, even unto the end of the world. He is the gateway between our past and the future He desires for us. No man comes to the Father, except through Him. He is the bridge in the middle, over which we can cross from mortal to immortal life. His body was one in which Spirit and Flesh met and mingled. He hangs suspended between Heaven and Earth, so that those who look upon Him might be saved.

In a study about the man in the middle, it is interesting to note how all scriptures intertwine into one body of truth. Because in the middle of all of time, stands that one man and one event that all the scriptures, from the Old and New point backwards and forwards to. Paul must have figured out what Jesus meant in **John 5:39** when He said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” Since every scripture points to the man in the middle, to Jesus, then every doctrine could be satisfied by comparing it to one simple message, one gospel.

Paul had to have been incredibly frustrated, trying to arbitrate various doctrines being taught in churches he had established. These were based on different interpretations of scriptures being put forth by well meaning seekers of truth. They were taking separate scriptures out of the context of the whole and using them to justify their private beliefs and their own interpretations. They were tearing apart the unity of the body of Christ. Paul eventually determined that his job was not to dispute the various doctrines of men or to determine the truth. His calling was to point men to a crucified Christ, the one in the middle, the one who came to bring life. He expressed this in **1 Corinthians 2:2**, saying he had determined not to know any thing among them, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Paul decided the message of the gospel, woven through the entire tapestry of scripture, might be far more important than doctrines contrived from individual verses.

There is a simple way to resolve the situation that occurs when two scriptures seem to yield two different versions of the same truth. We must decide whether all scripture comes from God or not, whether men wrote it on their own or as they were being moved upon by the Holy Ghost. One source is infallible, the other is not. Rest assured, it is a slippery slope we find ourselves on when we decide the scriptures contain error. That conclusion negates our entire basis for belief or even hope. Next, we must decide whether we believe God is capable of lying. If God wrote all scripture, and He does not lie, we are faced with one inescapable conclusion when two scriptures

seem to disagree. We are mistaken in our understanding of one or both of those scriptures. We have a remedy given for this lack of comprehension. The Spirit told James, who taught us: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

The ultimate test of any truth, mine included, would be this. Is there any scripture that contradicts my understanding or my doctrine? If so, which should change, my beliefs or the Word of God? In **1 John 5:7**, John warns us that three will testify against us in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. He goes on to tell us all three of these are the same, another way of letting us know their testimonies will agree. Jesus specifically said His words would be the standard against which we would be judged. **John 12:48** records this warning, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

So what are we to do when any scripture seems to dispute our doctrine? We could ask the man in the middle whether we should change or change the Word, but I am afraid we already have His answer. The best course is to change our doctrine to conform to all scripture. If all who believed differently did this, we would certainly meet somewhere in the middle.